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Conflict trends: A global overview, 1946–2025

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Cover: A protestor holds up a sign during a rally in Spain for the end to the war in Palestine. Credit: Paco Freire/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

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Cover photo: A protestor holds up a sign during a rally in Spain for the end to the war in Palestine. Credit: Paco Freire/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

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Executive summary

State-based conflict

In 2025, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) reported that approximately 245,000 individuals were killed in battle-related deaths. This was the third most violent year in the post–Cold War era. Three conflicts drove this trend: the Russian invasion of Ukraine; the violence in Sudan, including the massacre in El Fasher; and the bombardments of Gaza.

In 2025, the UCDP recorded the highest number of state-based conflicts since 1946, with 65 conflicts, 6 more than ever previously recorded, with approximately 153,000 battle deaths – surpassed only in 2021, 2022 and 2024. This indicates a persistently high level of state-based violence, with the past five years accounting for more battle-related deaths than the entire twenty-year period prior to 2021.

In 2025, 65 conflicts were recorded in 35 countries – an increase from 2024 in both the number of state-based conflicts and the number of countries experiencing them. Notably, the gap between the number of conflicts and the number of conflict countries has increased over the past decade, indicating a rise in countries hosting multiple simultaneous conflicts, such as Myanmar with five civil conflicts, and Israel with two civil conflicts and three international conflicts. In addition, a number of countries host more than three conflicts, such as Afghanistan, Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria and Pakistan. Only 16 out of the 35 conflict countries have only one conflict. This trend points to a growing complexity in conflict dynamics with more actors involved, which has important implications for how we analyse and respond to conflict.

Furthermore, interstate conflicts – conflicts between states – have increased substantially. In 2025 we saw eight international conflicts, a doubling since 2024 and the highest recorded since 1946. This is a very concerning trend, and we see several latent border conflicts having become violent, reflecting the current growing global tensions. There has also been a regional escalation in the Middle East, increasing the risk of a large multi-country conflict in the region. This trend has continued in 2026 with the USA–Iran war.

Non-state conflict

There were 75 non-state conflicts in 2025, which represents a slight decrease from the 79 non-state conflicts reported in 2024. Many of the non-state conflicts are low intensity, affecting the volatility in numbers of conflicts from year to year, since many of these conflicts only flare up occasionally. The number of battle-related deaths from such conflicts was approximately 14,500 in 2025, representing a downward trend since 2020. Particularly, we saw a decrease in lethal violence between Mexican drug cartels. Despite this, the number of non-state conflict battle-related deaths has stabilized at a substantially higher level compared to the period before 2013.

Africa was the region with the highest number of non-state conflicts, with 34 conflicts recorded. Of these, 14 occurred in Nigeria, but South Sudan and Ethiopia also experienced several non-state conflicts. Africa is closely followed by the Americas with 32, with Brazil, Colombia and Mexico constituting the main share.

One-sided violence

Almost 76,500 fatalities from one-sided violence against civilians were recorded in 2025, mainly due to the violence in Sudan carried out by non-state actors. This is the highest number recorded since the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The number of actors conducting one-sided violence reached an all-time high with 55, and the number of fatalities related to government killings increased in 2025 to almost 5,900. Particularly notable is the high level of fatalities related to post-election violence in Tanzania.

1. Introduction

In 2025, the total number of battle-related deaths associated with political violence amounted to 245,000, making 2025 the third most violent year since 1989, surpassed only by 2021 at the peak of the Ethiopian civil war in Tigray, and by the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The recent dramatic increase in battle deaths stems mainly from three conflicts: the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the airstrikes on Gaza by Israel and the political violence in Sudan including the siege and massacre in El Fasher. We also saw an all-time high number of state-based conflicts, rising to 65 – 6 more than the second highest number recorded (in 2024). This surge in violence calls for a re-examination of the trends and contexts in which conflict occurs. In this PRIO Paper, we provide an empirically grounded overview of global trends in conflict, which aims to support policymakers, practitioners, and regional and country experts to better understand the contexts in which they work.

The analyses in this paper are based on the rich conflict data that is collected and published annually by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). We provide an overview of various aspects of conflict trends at the global level, particularly since 1989. We examine three types of violence measured by the UCDP: state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence. More specific definitions of these terms are laid out in Section 1.1.[1]

1.1. Definitions

State-based conflict: a contested incompatibility over government and/or territory, where at least one party is a state and the use of armed force results in at least 25 battle-related deaths within a calendar year.

Non-state conflict: the use of armed force between organized groups, none of which is the government of a state, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths within a year.

One-sided violence: the use of armed force against civilians – by the government of a state or by a formally organized group – that results in at least 25 battle-related deaths per year. Extra-judicial killings in custody are excluded.

Battle-related deaths: fatalities caused by the warring parties that can be directly related to combat, including civilian losses.

War: a conflict or dyad that reaches at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a calendar year.[2]

2. Total level of direct battle-related deaths

The conflict level in the world has in the past few years increased substantially compared to previous decades. We also see a more complex conflict landscape with different types of conflicts and more conflict lines within countries, making conflicts more intricate. To measure the overall level of conflict, we use battle-related death figures across all three UCDP conflict types – state-based (Section 3), non-state (Section 4) and one-sided violence (Section 5) – as shown in Figure 1.

In 2025, approximately 245,000 people were killed in battle-related events. This is the third highest since 1989, only surpassed by 2021 and the Ethiopian civil war in Tigray, and by the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

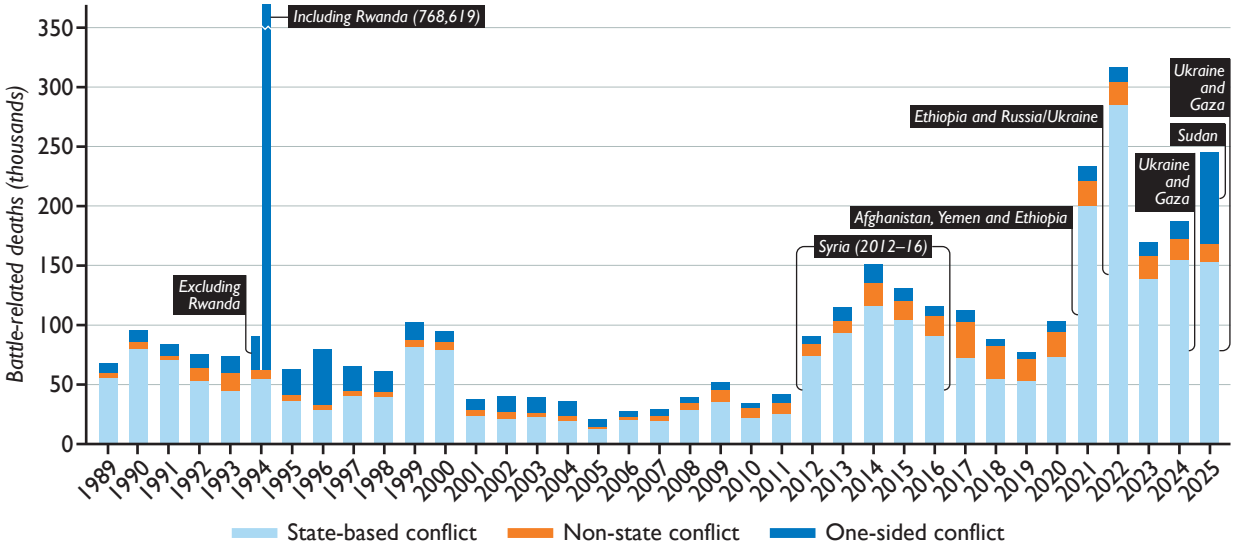

Figure 1: Number of battle-related fatalities by conflict type (state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence), 1946–2025. *Source: UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset, UCDP One-Sided Violence Dataset and Non-State Conflict Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

The graph clearly shows an increase in direct battle-related deaths over the past 14 years. With the exception of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, all years post-2013 are more violent than those prior to 2013 in the post–Cold War era. Most of the battle deaths relate to state-based conflict, but we also saw, for example, one-sided violence peak in 2025 due to the conflict in Sudan. The high levels of battle deaths are often driven by a few large conflicts. However, while prior to 2020 we often saw one large conflict at a time, in recent years we have seen an accumulation of large conflicts running concurrently.

The numbers reported here are direct battle deaths, which include those directly killed in conflict battles or attacks (both combatants and civilians). However, it is important to note that these figures do not include the vast number of people indirectly killed by armed conflicts due to the lack of infrastructure, health facilities or food security. Nor do they include those injured in an

attack who died later.[3] Thus, although these numbers reflect the conflict level in the world, they are conservative estimates. Numbers from indirect deaths are difficult to verify due to the lack of reliable data.

Figure 2 compares battle-related deaths in all three types of conflicts by country in 2024 and 2025. We can observe a sharp increase in total deaths, from 188,000 in 2024 to 245,000 in 2025. This increase was mainly driven by the devastating increase in one-sided violence in Sudan, related to the siege and massacre in El Fasher, where the UCDP data reports that almost 60,000 people were killed in the last week of October 2025. Deaths in Ukraine decreased slightly, but remained high, while we see a decrease in Israel, mainly due to the ceasefires in the Gaza conflict. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), we note an almost doubling of deaths. This is due to the attack by the Rwanda-supported rebel group M23 on the regional capital of North Kivu, Goma, early in 2025. There was a substantial decrease in deaths in Mexico related to the drug cartels (non-state conflicts). However, other sources indicate that while lethal violence has decreased in Mexico, other types of violence such as abductions, smuggling and extortion have increased.[4]

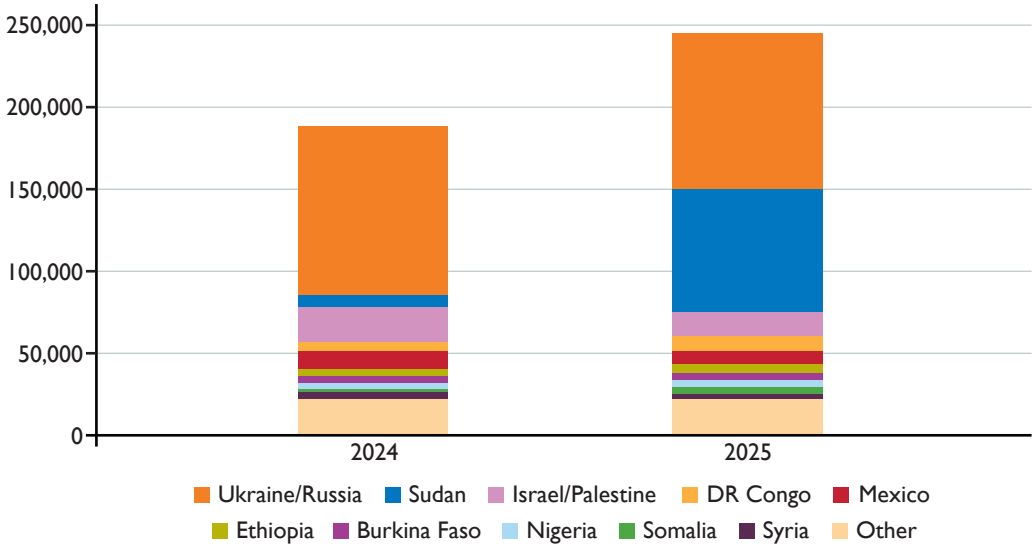

Figure 2: Share of battle-related deaths in 2024 and 2025 in state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence. *Source: UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset, UCDP One-Sided Violence Dataset and Non-State Conflict Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

3. State-based conflict

The UCDP categorizes four different types of state-based conflicts: colonial conflict; interstate conflict; civil conflict; and internationalized civil conflict. Of these, civil conflicts are the most common.

To be classified as a state-based conflict, there must be a contested incompatibility over government control (e.g. between the government of Mali and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM)) and/or territory (e.g. between the government of Israel and Hamas over Palestine), where violent conflict between two armed groups results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year. This measure is crucial, as it indicates the severity of a conflict and helps distinguish between conflicts and wars.

3.1. Global trends in state-based conflict

The level of state-based conflicts has fluctuated over time. Figure 3 depicts the number and type of state-based conflicts between 1946 and 2025. The black line shows the number of battle-related deaths per year. The number of battle-related deaths in state-based conflict in 2025 was approximately 153,000, approximately the same level as in 2024, and the fourth highest recorded since the end of the Cold War, only surpassed by those recorded in 2021, 2022 and 2024.

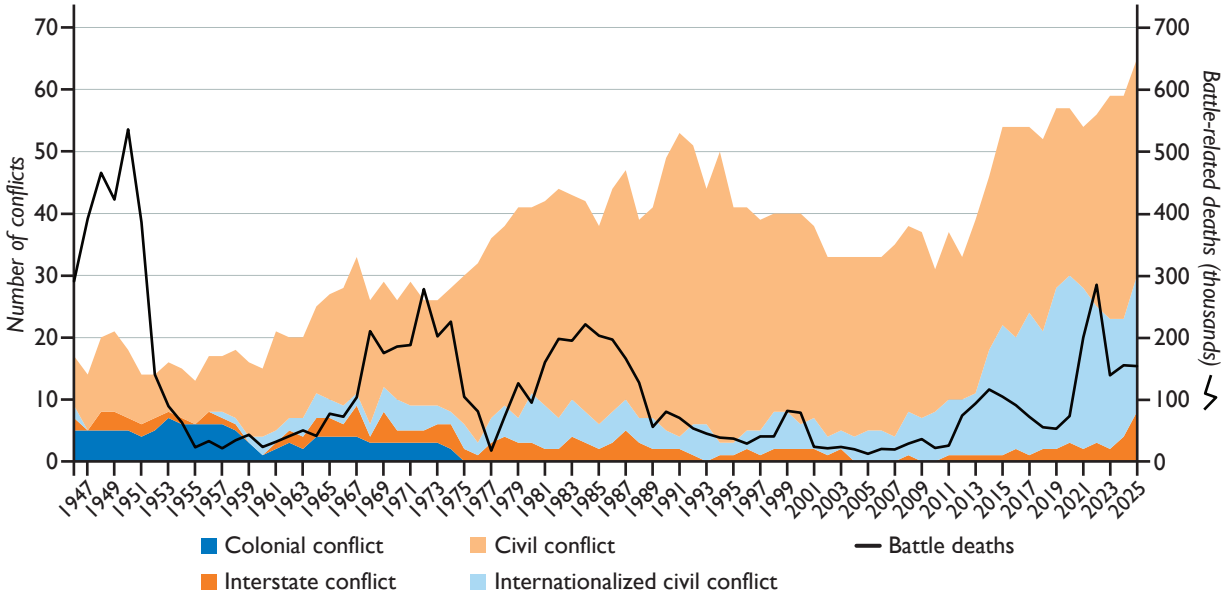

Figure 3: Number of state-based armed conflicts by conflict type, 1946–2025. *Source: Lacina and Gleditsch Battle Death Datasets (2005), UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset and UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

Based on an analysis of state-based armed conflicts over time, we can identify four main trends.

3.1.1. Battle-related deaths

First, despite a sharp decrease in battle-related deaths between 2022 and 2023, the past five years have been the most violent period since the end of the Cold War. Between 2021 and 2025, more than 930,000 people were killed in conflict. This is approximately the same as the total number recorded in the 20-year period prior to 2021. Three wars have driven this increase. The war between the government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) accounted for over 288,000 deaths in 2021 and 2022. Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine has resulted in approximately 370,000 battle-related deaths over the past three years (2022–2025), which is the highest recorded number of battle deaths for a single conflict since 1989. The Israel–Gaza war caused an estimated 70,000 deaths between 2023 and 2025. While the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas has de-escalated the conflict in Palestine, we have also seen an escalation in the conflict in southern Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah, a trend continuing in 2026. In addition, the brutal conflict in Sudan between rival factions of the military government severely escalated in 2025, with over 12,000 reportedly killed as part of the civil war. However, the vast majority of battle-related deaths in Sudan are linked to one-sided violence directed towards civilians by either the government, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) or Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), generating a total of 75,000 recorded battle-related deaths in 2025. This violence has precipitated the most severe humanitarian crisis currently facing Africa, with incalculable numbers of indirect conflict deaths as well.

3.1.2. Increasing number of conflicts

Second, after a decline in state-based conflicts in the 1990s, the past decade has seen a troubling resurgence. In each of the last 11 years, more than 50 state-based conflicts have been recorded annually, peaking in 2025 with 65. The early 1990s mark the only other period since 1946 with comparable levels of conflict. That surge can be explained by two main factors.

First, during the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union often supported different sides in civil wars. Thus, the warring parties had easier access to funding, and we saw an accumulation of civil conflicts during the 1980s and early 1990s (Mumford, 2013). Second, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia triggered a series of new conflicts. However, with the end of the Cold War, the funding for civil wars dried up, and many of the conflicts related to the former Soviet Union were relatively short lived, leading to a substantial decrease in conflict in the late 1990s and 2000s.

The rise in state-based conflicts since 2015 can partly be attributed to the expansion of the Islamic State (IS) across Asia, Africa and the Middle East. In many cases, IS has become involved

in pre-existing conflicts, such as Boko Haram's in Nigeria, or the Mindanao conflict in the Philippines. However, because the UCDP dataset records each IS-related engagement as a separate conflict, this has contributed to a marked increase in the overall number of state-based conflicts. Notably, IS was active in 12 countries in 2025 – the lowest level since 2015 – suggesting that the organization is no longer the main driver of the rising number of conflicts. On the other hand, the number has been stable for several years, suggesting that it has become well established in these countries. This points to the growing influence of other non-state actors. For example, the JNIM – a jihadist coalition formed in 2017 through the merger of several Islamist groups – has significantly expanded its operations across West Africa and was active in five countries in the region in 2025.

3.1.3. Conflicts between states

The third main trend emerging from the data is the growing internationalization of conflicts. While civil conflict has been the most common conflict type since the 1960s, in the past years we have seen an increase in the number of interstate conflicts (i.e. conflicts between countries). In 2024, the UCDP recorded four international conflicts – the highest number since 1983. However, this number increased to eight in 2025, the highest recorded in the post–World War II period. This trend reflects an increasing tension in the world, where protectionism and aggression are becoming more and more common.

We can split the international conflicts broadly into three categories (see Figure 4): border conflicts, regional escalatory conflicts and invasions. The first category includes conflicts over disputed borders or border territory. For example, the longstanding Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan flared up in 2025 for the first time since 2020. In addition, enduring tensions along the Afghan and Pakistani border, as well as between Thailand and Cambodia, also escalated to conflict levels in 2025. While all of these conflicts are separate, they represent increased tension on the global scene, and countries' inclination to protect themselves.

The second group – regional escalatory conflicts – relates specifically to the conflict in the Middle East, and the increasing hostility between the Arab countries in the region, Israel and the USA, and to some extent the Western sphere. These are tensions we see growing in 2026, which could potentially escalate to a larger regional war.

In the third category, we have two conflicts that can be classified as invasions – the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and Israel's invasion of Syria in the wake of the fall of the Assad regime. Israel attacked several Syrian military infrastructures, arguing that this was to protect their short border with Syria. This conflict could also be argued to be part of the regional escalatory category, as tensions between Israel and Syria are often related to the conflict between Israel and Iran.

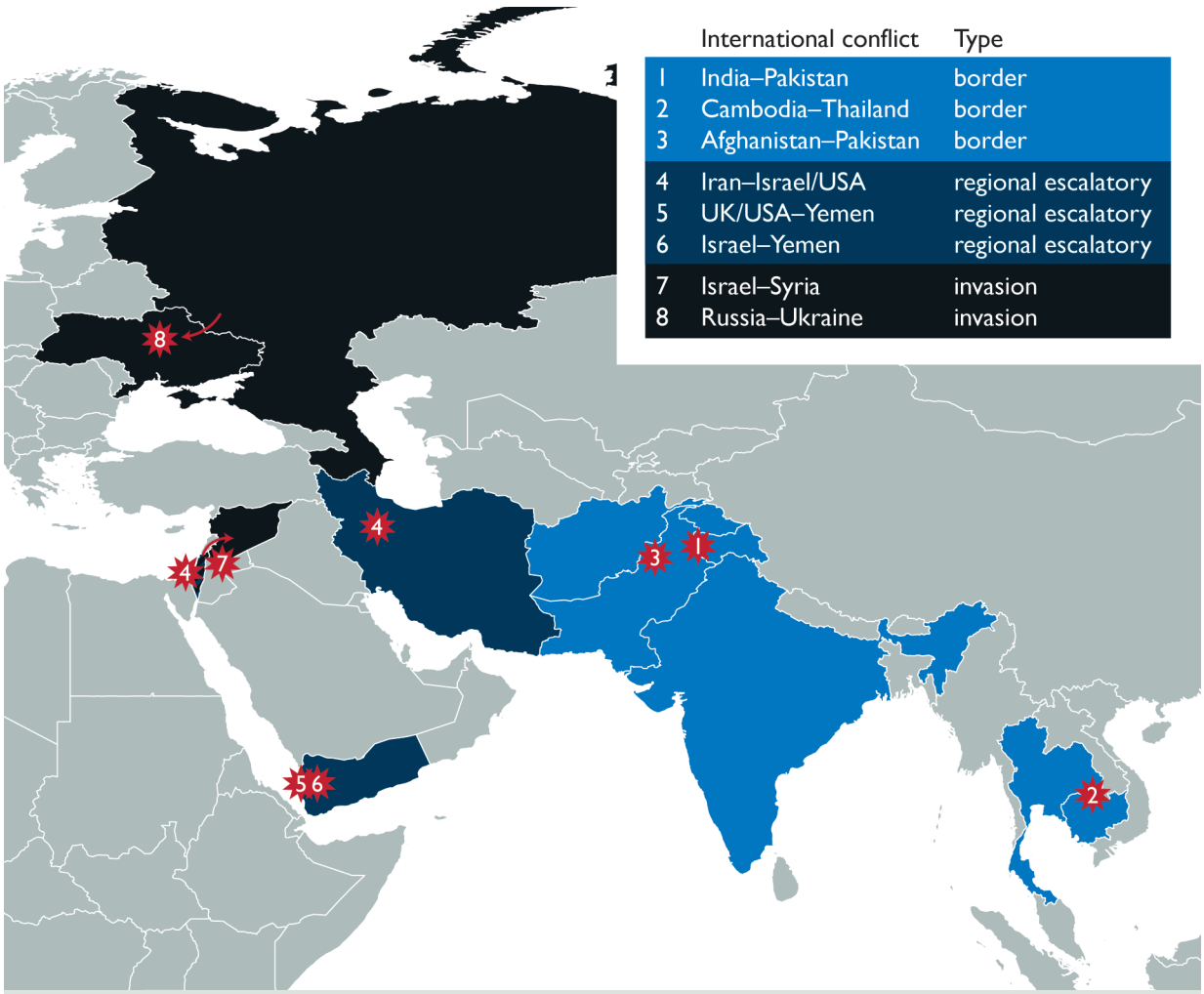

Figure 4: Type and location of international conflicts in 2025. *Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, and UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset and UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

3.1.4. Complexity of conflicts

Another emerging trend is the growing complexity of conflict. The data shows that a single country can host several conflicts. Figure 5 illustrates this trend by comparing the total number of conflicts (blue line) with the number of countries affected by conflict per year (blue bar). Up until 2012, the ratio of countries and conflicts was relatively stable: the number of conflicts slightly exceeded the number of countries, indicating that some countries faced more than one conflict in a given year. However, after 2012, the gap widened – conflicts became more numerous, while the number of affected countries declined. In 2025, 65 conflicts affected 35 countries.[5] This suggests that global conflict levels have not necessarily risen, but that some countries experience more conflict (a list of all conflict countries can be found at the end of this report). There could be many reasons for why we see this trend: past conflict increases the likelihood of new

conflict; conflict parties splinter and generate more and new conflicts; weak states cannot control the monopoly of violence; and the lines between political violence, crime and militias become indistinct.

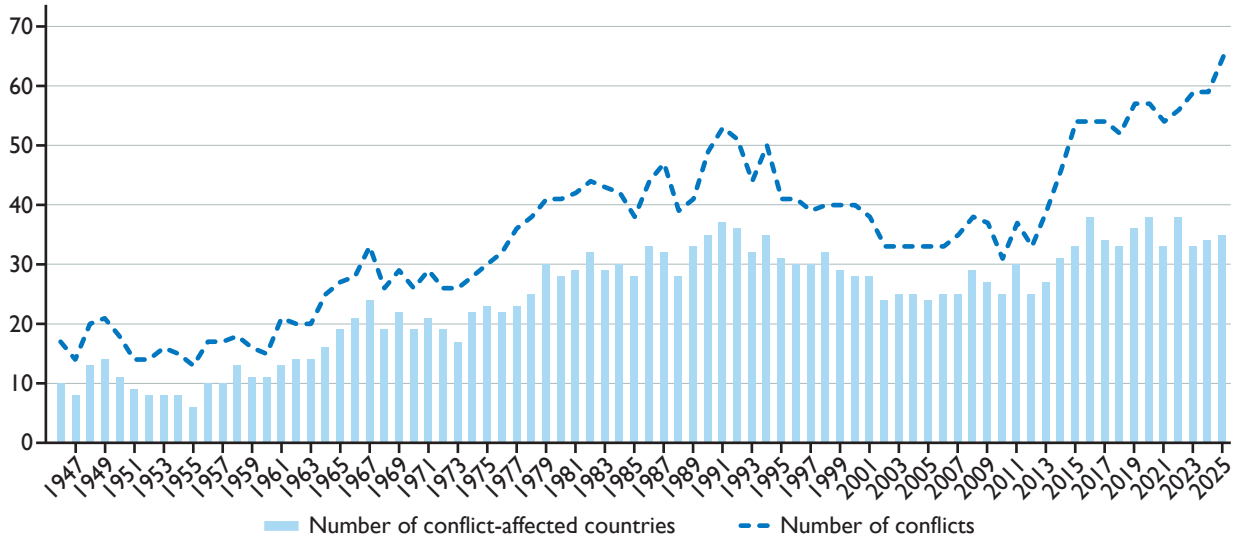

Figure 5: Number of conflicts and conflict-affected countries, 1946–2025. *Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset and UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

3.2. Trends in conflict intensity

Typically, a few high-intensity conflicts – referred to as wars – account for the majority of global battle-related deaths. Although wars are fewer in number than conflicts, they cause significantly more fatalities. Figure 6 distinguishes between conflicts and wars. The number of wars peaked in 2014, reaching 13 – nearly 30% of the total number of violent conflicts. From 2018, the number of wars began to decline. However, this trend reversed in 2022, with the number rising again. This trend continued in 2025, reaching the recorded number of 13 wars again, although as the total number of conflicts has increased, its share is only 20%. These 13 wars included Burkina Faso, the DRC, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iran–Israel/USA, Israel (Gaza), Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia–Ukraine, Somalia and Sudan–RSF/SFA.

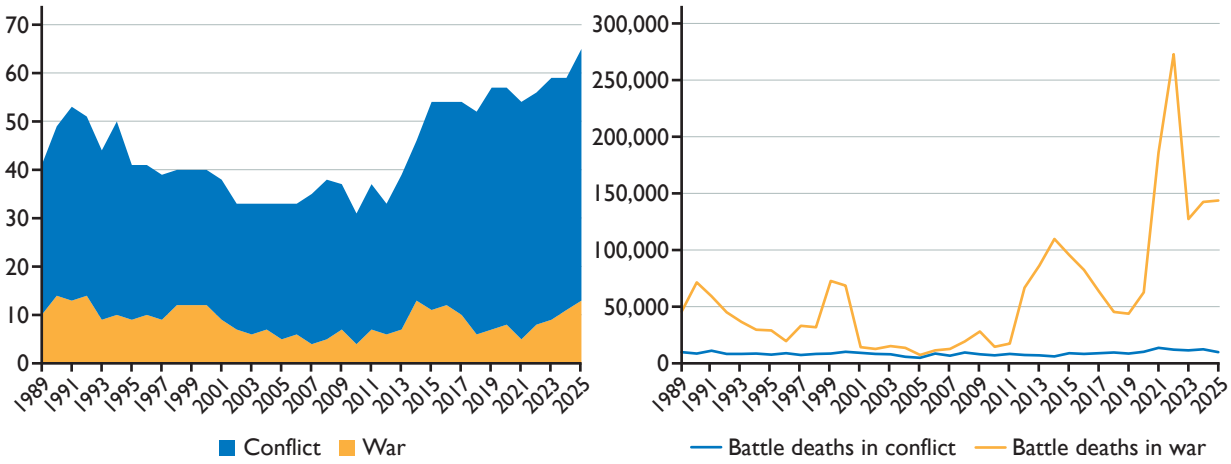

Figure 6: Number of conflicts, wars and battle-related deaths resulting from each, 1989–2025.
Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset and UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).

3.3. Regional variation in state-based conflict

Figure 7 presents regional trends from 1946 to 2025. In 2025, Africa remained the region with the highest number of state-based conflict (29), followed by Asia (19), the Middle East (13), the Americas (2) and Europe (1). Compared to a decade ago, the number of conflicts in Africa has nearly doubled, from 15 in 2013 to 29 in 2025, mainly due to an increase in the number of conflicts per country, rather than new conflict countries entering the data. Over the same period, the continent has also experienced increasingly brutal conflicts, particularly in Ethiopia, Sudan and the DRC.

We also saw an increase in the number of conflicts in the Middle East from 10 in 2024 to 13 in 2025. This is the highest recorded number of conflicts in the region since 1946. In Asia, we saw an increase from 17 to 19, he highest seen in Asia since 1994. These regional trends suggest that the increase in violence is not limited to one region, but is evident across multiple areas. On the other hand, in the Americas the situation is stable with two conflicts (Haiti and Colombia). However, we saw a substantial increase in violence in Haiti, from approximately 200 battle deaths in 2024 to more than 1,200 in 2025. Violence there surged in 2025 due to the near collapse of state authority, coordinated gang expansion, a prolonged political vacuum, a humanitarian crisis and a delayed international security response. This is a conflict that has received little attention both in the media and among decisionmakers. Europe is the only region with a decrease in its number of conflicts from three to one; the two that were previously noted were minor internal conflicts in Russia against IS and the Freedom of Russia Legion (LSR).

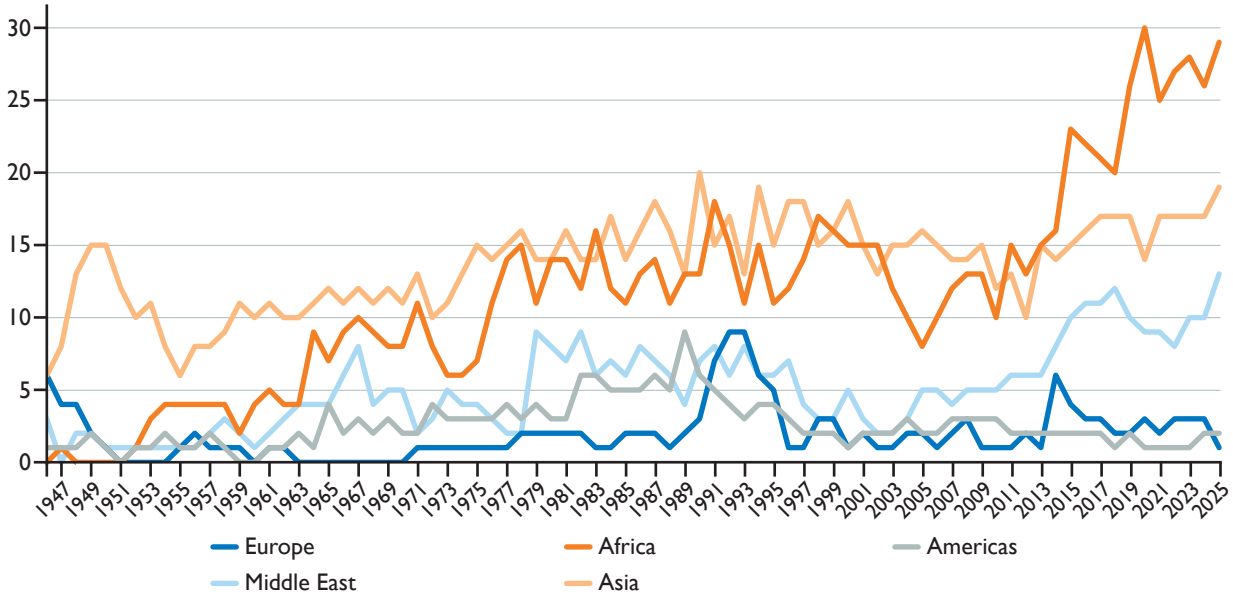

Figure 7: Number of countries with state-based armed conflict by region, 1946–2025.
Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).

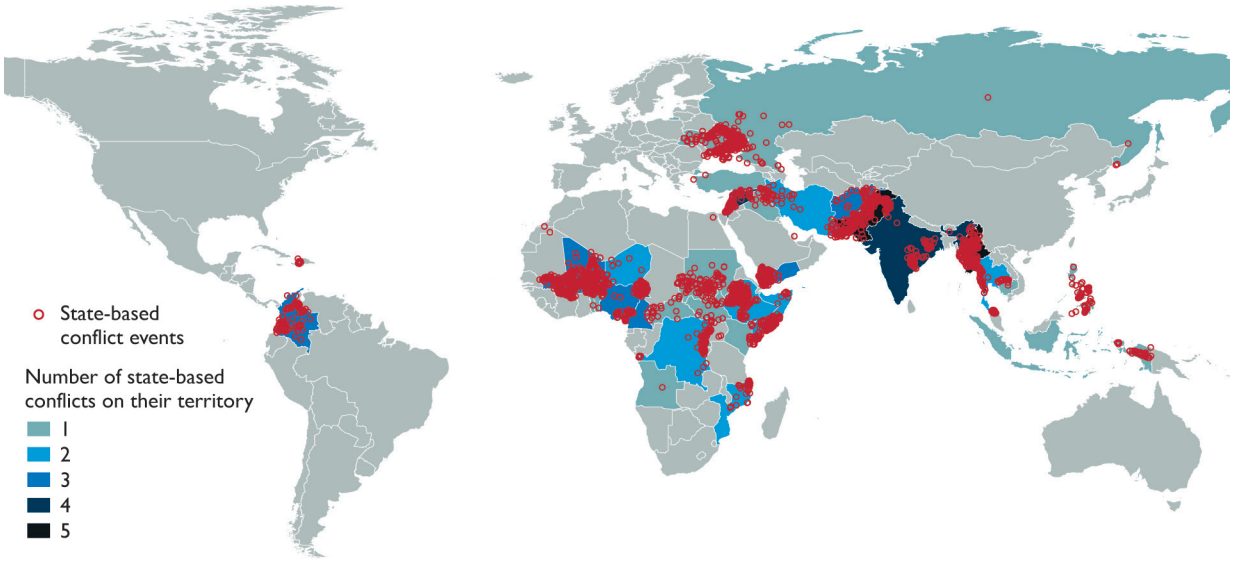

Figure 8: State-based conflict events and conflict-affected countries, 2025. *Source: UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

Figure 8 presents a global overview of state-based conflict events in 2025. These events, represented by red dots, are heavily concentrated in Ukraine, Israel and Syria, across parts of Africa – particularly in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger – and in Pakistan and the Philippines. In addition, several conflict events occurred in Russia, particularly in the Caucasus region. The map also indicates

the number of conflicts that each country experienced: the darker the blue, the more conflict the country faced. The highest number is five, which includes Myanmar and Pakistan, while the average number of conflicts per conflict country is 1.8. This underscores the increasing complexity of the current global landscape.

4. Non-state conflicts

Conflicts do not need to involve a state government to inflict considerable human suffering. In fact, much of today's violence occurs between organized groups without governmental links. These groups take many forms, as discussed in Section 3.1.

4.1. Global trends in non-state violence

Non-state conflicts have increased over the past decade. In 2025, there were 75 non-state conflicts, a slight decrease from 79 in 2024. As Figure 9 indicates, the number of non-state conflicts has stabilized at a considerably higher level than we saw a decade ago. The UCDP identifies three types of non-state groups: (i) formally organized groups, which are any non-governmental actors who have publicly named themselves and use armed force against other similarly organized groups; (ii) informally organized groups – typically supporters of political parties; and (iii) informally organized (communal conflicts) groups – loosely organized actors linked by shared identity markers such as religion, ethnicity, nationality, tribe or clan.

The rise in non-state conflicts is primarily driven by a sharp increase in the number of conflicts between formally organized groups. Conflicts between informally organized groups have remained low in recent years – generally fewer than two per year – while communal conflicts have increased gradually. The graph indicates that the number of non-state conflicts seems to have stabilized over the past decade at between 75 and 85 conflicts. Figure 9 also shows the number of battle-related deaths by type of non-state group. In total, non-state conflicts caused approximately 14,500 battle-related deaths in 2025, marking a slight decrease from 2024. This decrease is driven by a decline in battle-related deaths among drug cartels in Mexico, where we have seen a change from lethal violence to other types of violence such as disappearances and extortion.

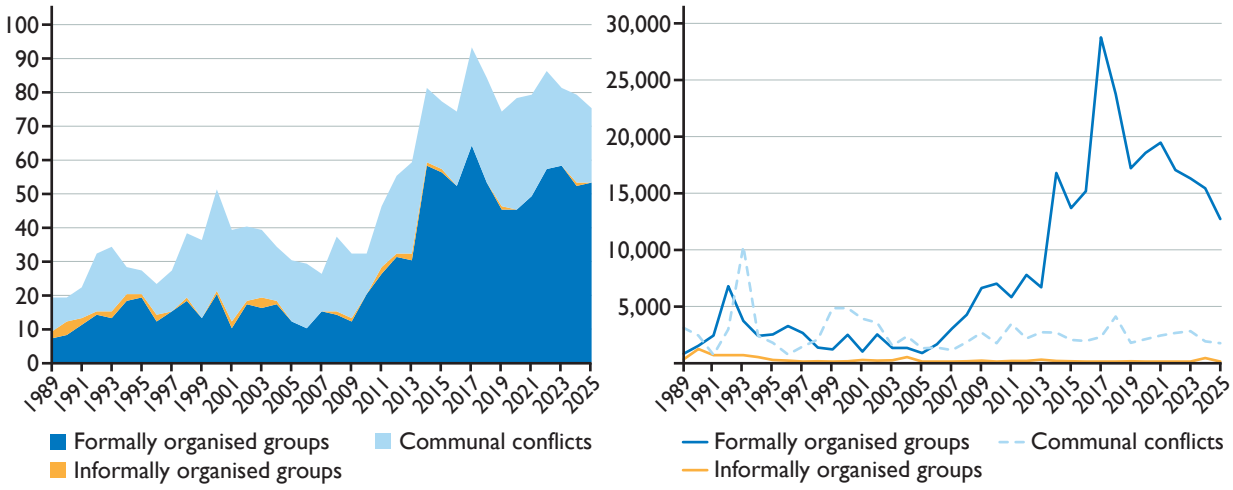

Figure 9: Non-state conflicts by conflict type and battle-related deaths in non-state conflict by organization type, 1989–2025. *Source: UCDP Non-State Conflict Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

4.2. Regional variation

Figure 10 illustrates regional trends in non-state conflicts from 1989 to 2025. Africa recorded the highest number in 2025, with 34, closely followed by the Americas with 32. However, both regions have seen a decrease over the past years.

While both Africa and the Americas host a high number of non-state conflicts, they involve different types of non-state actors. In the Americas, non-state conflicts are more likely to involve highly organized actors, while in Africa, communal conflicts are more common. The Middle East, which saw the largest increase in non-state conflicts during the 2010s, has since experienced a sharp decline. But in 2025, we saw an increase from three to eight, which coincides with the increase in state-based conflicts in the region. Europe and Asia continue to report relatively low levels of non-state conflicts.

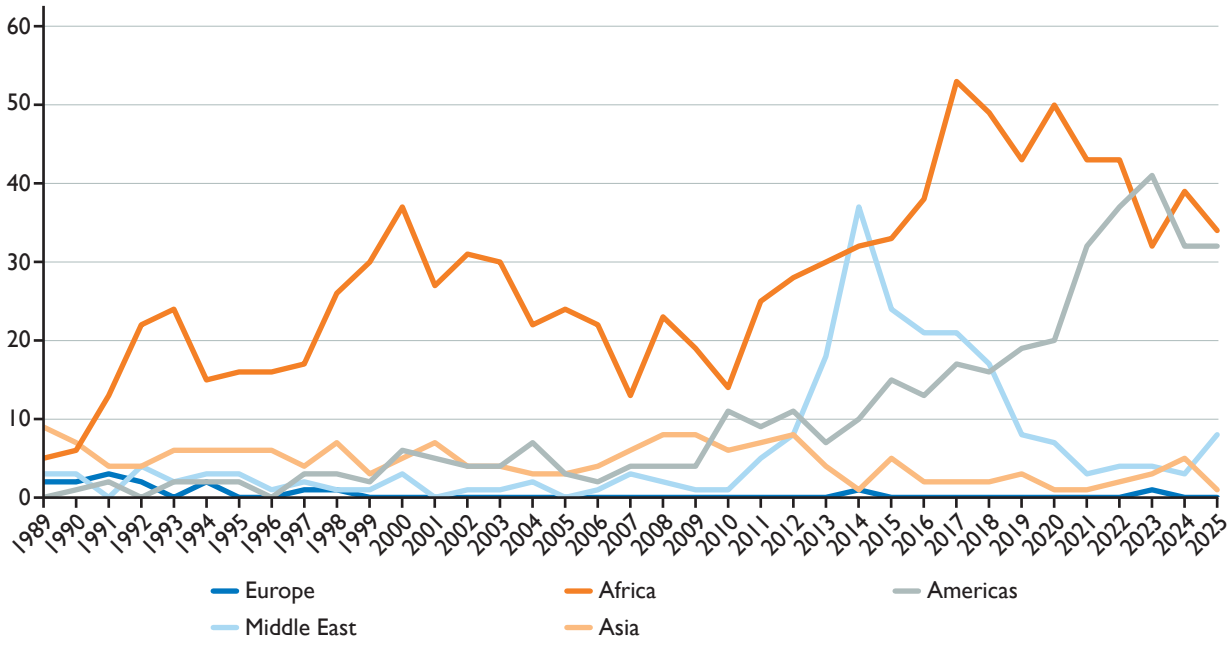

Figure 10: Total number of non-state conflicts by region, 1989–2025. *Source: UCDP Non-State Conflict Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

5. One-sided violence

Civilians often bear the brunt of violence in ongoing conflicts, whether state-based or non-state. The UCDP definition of one-sided violence excludes extrajudicial killings, which means that violence perpetrated by governments is likely to be under-reported in the data.

5.1. Global trends in one-sided violence

Overall, fatalities from one-sided violence rose from 14,200 in 2024 to 76,500 in 2025. This extreme increase can be explained by the ongoing violence in Sudan – approximately 62,500 of the number are fatalities registered in Sudan. Most of these – approximately 60,000 – are related to the siege and massacre in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur. The El Fasher massacre was a large-scale, ethnically targeted killing of civilians following the RSF takeover of North Darfur's last major city in October 2025, after a prolonged siege, and has been described by UN investigators as bearing the hallmarks of genocide.[6]

Figure 11 illustrates the number of perpetrators of one-sided violence per year by actor type – government or non-state actor (left) – alongside the number of resulting fatalities (right). As well as the massive killings in Sudan in 2025, we also saw high levels of one-sided violence by non-state actors in the DRC, including IS-related violence. Another notable episode of violence was the post-election violence in Tanzania in November and December 2025, with more than 1,000 fatalities resulting from the Tanzanian security forces' crackdown on protests. This is significant, as the UCDP data has never recorded this level of violence in Tanzania before in any of the three categories of conflict.

Since the 2000s, the number of actors perpetrating one-sided violence has steadily increased, remaining above 40 since 2019. In 2025, 55 actors were recorded – 17 government and 38 non-state actors. This is the highest number recorded since 1989.

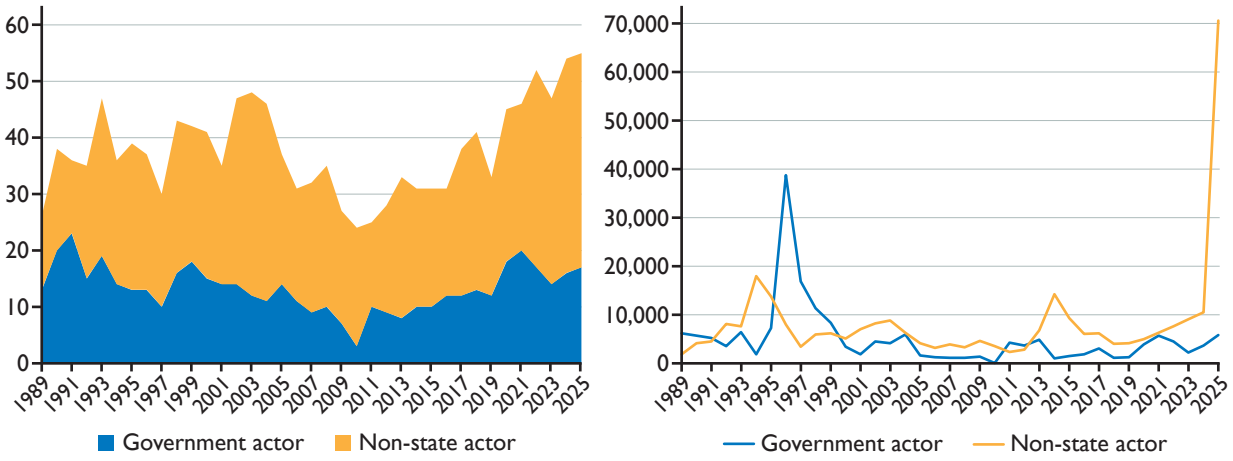

Figure 11: Incidents of one-sided violence including number of perpetrators and fatalities, 1989–2025.[7] *Source: UCDP One-Sided Violence Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

5.2. Regional variation

The use of one-sided violence varies across regions. Figure 12 displays the number of groups that conducted one-sided violence in each region between 1989 and 2025. As with non-state conflicts, Africa hosts the highest number of such groups and governments, with 29 recorded, a slight increase from 2024 (27). We also see a worrying increase in the Middle East from two to five groups. Comparatively, the Americas have 13, Asia 5 and Europe none. However, these figures reflect only the number of groups – not the scale or intensity of the violence they commit.

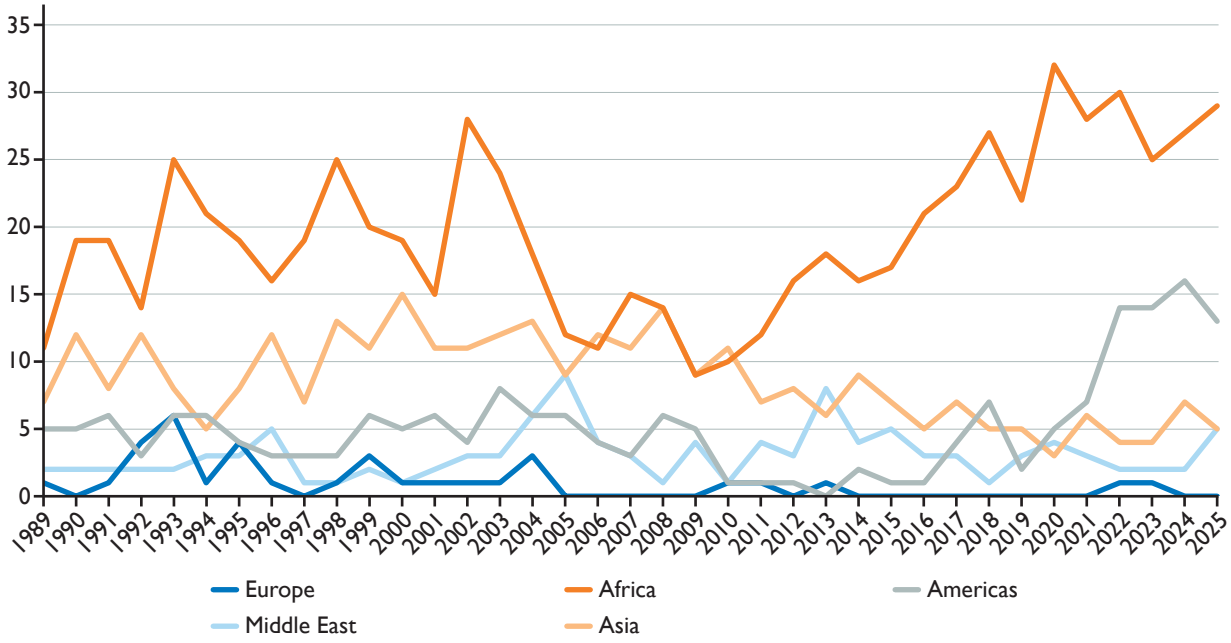

Figure 12: Number of actors who used one-sided violence by region, 1989–2025. *Source: UCDP One-Sided Violence Dataset (Pettersson, Davies & Öberg, 2026).*

6. Conclusion

In this PRIO Paper, we have provided an overview of global trends in state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence from 1946 to 2025. By disaggregating the data to regional and country levels, we have aimed to acquire a better understanding of contemporary conflict patterns.

What does the data tell us about state-based conflicts in 2025? The level of political violence has continued to escalate, and we saw a staggering 245,000 killed. The main share of this relates to the war between Russia and Ukraine, the bombing of Gaza, as well as the one-sided violence in Sudan. But we also saw an increasing number of conflicts reach the threshold of war (i.e. more than 1,000 battle-related deaths). The level of violence remains high by historical standards, making 2025 the third most violent year since the end of the Cold War.

A total of 65 state-based conflicts were recorded in 35 conflict-affected countries, a new record, with 6 more conflicts than in 2024. The main share of these came from civil conflict, although we also saw a worrying trend of increased international conflicts. In 2025, eight international conflicts were recorded, a doubling from 2024 and the highest since 1946. These can broadly be divided into invasions, border conflicts and regional escalations in the Middle East.

The number of non-state conflicts declined from 79 in 2023 to 75 in 2025. Battle-related deaths in these conflicts reached 14,500 in 2025, a decrease from 2024 that can be ascribed to a reduction in lethal violence between drug cartels in Mexico. Africa and the Americas remained the regions with the highest number of non-state conflicts, although the nature of these conflicts differs significantly. In the Americas, they are often driven by highly organized groups such as gangs and drug cartels. In contrast, non-state conflicts in Africa are more frequently communal in nature.

In 2025, almost 76,500 fatalities were attributed to one-sided violence, most relating to the violence in Sudan, and the highest recorded number since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. While non-state actors were responsible for the majority of these fatalities, 17 governments also perpetrated one-sided violence. This type of violence often occurs within the context of state-based conflicts, as seen in Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the conflict in the DRC. However, similarly to non-state conflicts, there is an increase in one-sided violence beyond active war zones – particularly in the Americas. Countries like Brazil and Mexico, which are not experiencing state-based conflicts, have nonetheless seen a substantial amount of this type of violence.

This PRIO Paper confirms that the level of violence is increasing, that this now is part of a longer trend and not just a peak, and that a new, higher baseline of global violence has emerged. 2025 was the third most deadly year since the end of the Cold War, and we see that the period post-2013 has overall been more violent than the period prior to 2013 during the Cold War era. The growing number of international conflicts reflects an increasing global tension. Growing complexity poses serious challenges for international and humanitarian actors, such as in Sudan,

making it more and more difficult to navigate and operate within the conflict landscape. But we also see new conflicts emerging, for example in Haiti, where the relatively new state-based conflict caused more than 1,000 battle deaths, and in the relatively stable and historically peaceful country of Tanzania, which saw more than 1,000 people killed by security forces in post-election protests. ■

State-based conflict-affected countries by region

Number of conflicts in parentheses. International conflicts are included in the count for both countries if battles have occurred in each.

Africa

- Angola (1)
- Benin (1)
- Burkina Faso (2)
- Cameroon (3)
- Central African Republic (1)
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (2)
- Ethiopia (2)
- Kenya (1)
- Mali (3)
- Mozambique (3)
- Niger (2)
- Nigeria (3)
- Rwanda (1)
- Somalia (1)
- South Sudan (1)
- Sudan (1)
- Togo (1)

Americas

- Colombia (1)
- Haiti (1)

Asia

- Afghanistan (3)
- Cambodia (1)
- India (4)
- Indonesia (1)
- Myanmar (5)
- Pakistan (4)
- Philippines (1)
- Thailand (1)

Europe

- Ukraine (1)
- Russia (1)

Middle East

- Iran (2)
- Iraq (1)
- Israel (5)
- Syria (4)
- Turkey (1)
- Yemen (3)

Notes

1. We should note the limitations of our PRIO Papers in the *Conflict Trends Reporting* series. We rely on UCDP data because it offers the best available statistics when it comes to armed violence, yet some caveats remain. The UCDP's data faces two criticisms: coding source bias and inaccuracy in reported numbers, both of which present limitations to the data. Coding is based on news reports as well as dispatches from human rights organizations and the UN. Open-source information can be subject to manipulation by governments. Moreover, it is difficult to obtain quality data on violence in detention centres and on extrajudicial killings, and such deaths are thus by definition excluded from the UCDP's data on one-sided violence. Additional information on extrajudicial killings can be found in the Political Terror Scale (PTS), which is the most widely used data source on this topic. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch should be consulted for country-specific reports.

2. Unless otherwise noted, and for simplicity's sake, we often use the term 'conflict' to refer to both armed conflicts (with a minimum of 25 battle-related deaths per year) and wars (armed conflicts with more than 1,000 battle-related deaths per year). The exception is when we examine conflict intensity, which is when we distinguish between 'conflict' and 'war'.

3. The UCDP data is mainly based on news items, hence it only codes those killed in an attack as they are reported in the news. Thus, if several people were injured, sent to hospital and then later died, their deaths would not necessarily be reported in the news, nor therefore recorded in the data.

4. Security Risks Report – Mexico, May 2025. *Convex*. Accessed 2 May 2026. Available at: convexin.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Mexico_Security_Risks_Report_May_2025_ENG.pdf.

5. This only includes countries with battles on their territory; hence, while the UK and USA are involved in conflicts with Yemen and Iran, they are not included in this number.

6. UN Concludes RSF Committed Genocide in El-Fasher; Yale Lab Provided Key Evidence. *Yale School of Public Health.* Accessed 2 May 2026. Available at: ysph.yale.edu/news-article/un-concludes-rsf-conducted-genocide-in-el-fasher-yale-lab-provided-key-evidence.

7. Figure 11 excludes one-sided fatalities related to the genocide in Rwanda due to the magnitude of the violence. The UCDP's one-sided violence data registered 768,619 fatalities in Rwanda in 1994 at the hands of the Rwandan government.

Further reading

Davies, Shawn; Therése Pettersson & Magnus Öberg (forthcoming) Organized violence 1989–2024, and the return of conflict between states. *Journal of Peace Research*.

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Mumford, Andrew (2013) Proxy warfare and the future of conflict. *The RUSI Journal* 158(2): 40–46.

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Sundberg, Ralph; Erik Melander (2013) Introducing the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset. *Journal of Peace Research* 50(4): 523–532. DOI: 10.1177/0022343313484347.

Conflict trends: A global overview, 1946–2025

This PRIO Paper examines global conflict trends between 1946 and 2025 using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). 2025 was one of the most violent years since the Cold War, with 65 active conflicts across 35 countries – the highest number recorded since 1946 – and more than 255,000 fatalities. The high number of battle-related deaths was driven mainly by three conflicts: the Russian invasion of Ukraine; the bombardments of Gaza; and the high levels of one-sided violence in Sudan, particularly in the massacre in El Fasher. We also see an increase in international conflicts, with a doubling from four in 2024, to eight in 2025. This is a very concerning trend, and we see several latent border conflicts which have become violent, reflecting the current growing global tensions. While state-based violence increased, non-state conflicts decreased slightly compared to previous years. In 2025, 75 non-state conflicts were recorded, resulting in approximately 14,500 battle-related deaths. Africa is still the continent with the highest levels of non-state violence. The level of one-sided violence against civilians increased dramatically from 14,200 in 2024 to 76,500 in 2025. This increase can be attributed to the conflict in Sudan. In 2025, the number of actors using one-sided violence was at a record high.

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